



Volume 33
Issue 1 March - Special Issue on Coping with
Poverty

Article 23

2006

Concepts and Strategies for Combating Social Exclusion: An Overview. Jordi Estivill.

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Recommended Citation

(2006) "*Concepts and Strategies for Combating Social Exclusion: An Overview.* Jordi Estivill.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 33 : Iss. 1 , Article 23.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol33/iss1/23>

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Nevertheless, there is much in this book that will be of interest to social workers everywhere. It asks important questions about the role of residential care in social welfare today and provides useful comparative information. Since residential care is often perceived as a means of exercising control over people with severe behavioral problems, the notion of anti-oppressive practice in custodial residential settings is particularly interesting. Hopefully, the book will serve as a catalyst for more extensive debates on the role of residential care in social work and permit a thorough review of this much neglected field.

Jordi Estivill, *Concepts and Strategies for Combating Social Exclusion: An Overview*. Geneva: International Labour Office, 2004. \$11.95 papercover.

The concept of social exclusion is frequently used in social policy circles in Europe today, and although it has not been widely adopted in the United States, many more American social work and social welfare scholars now employ the term. However, as in Europe, the term is still poorly defined. While some use it as a synonym for poverty, others relate it more specifically to the notion of the underclass. In this latter sense, the excluded are a sector of poor people with particular needs arising out of an inability to engage with the wider society. These ambiguities have called the usefulness of the concept into question, and some have concluded that it should be abandoned.

However, as this publication reveals, the concept is now being used by international agencies such as the International Labour Organization and it is likely that scholars in many more countries will adopt the term. It is also likely that it will be more frequently used in international social policy and social development circles. For these reasons, there is a need to standardize the term and ensure that social welfare researchers around the world are clear about its meaning.

Estivill devotes the first chapter of the book to a discussion of the concept and the way it has been defined. He acknowledges the problems of seeking to standardize the term, and shows that it has been used loosely in much social policy writing. He

pays specific attention to the relationship between the concept of social exclusion and poverty, making the point that social exclusion has a broader connotation since people who are not poor are sometimes excluded from mainstream society. He cites a study by Amnesty International which found that gay people are persecuted in at least 70 countries of the world. Even though a significant number may not be poor, their persecution clearly involves social exclusion.

However, the primary purpose of the book is not to debate terminology, but to focus on the strategies that governments can adopt to combat social exclusion. Estivill offers a useful typology of anti-exclusionary strategies that have been employed in different countries and he provides a set of recommendations for dealing with the problem. The author places great emphasis on the role of public awareness and education, and he believes that great effort should be made to involve civil society institutions in the process of combating social exclusion. Nonprofit organizations, trade unions, business corporations as well as governments have a vital role to play. By outlining these strategies, the book makes a useful contribution to the literature. Its discussion of the meaning of the concept, and of the way it is manifested in social life today, will also be helpful to practitioners and scholars concerned with the challenges of fragmentation and factionalism that increasingly characterize modern societies.

Johanna Schoen, *Choice & Coercion, Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. \$63.00 hardcover, \$18.00 paper-cover.

As a society we are presented daily with "expert opinions" promoting the pros and cons of abortion, stem cell research, genetic testing, reproductive technologies, and right to die issues. Indeed it would seem that the "good old days" of the nuclear family has gone by the wayside. Enveloped by nostalgia, we tend to idealize the past as a time when the simple life prevailed, and our decisions were not mired in the outrageous ethical dilemma's induced by modern technology.